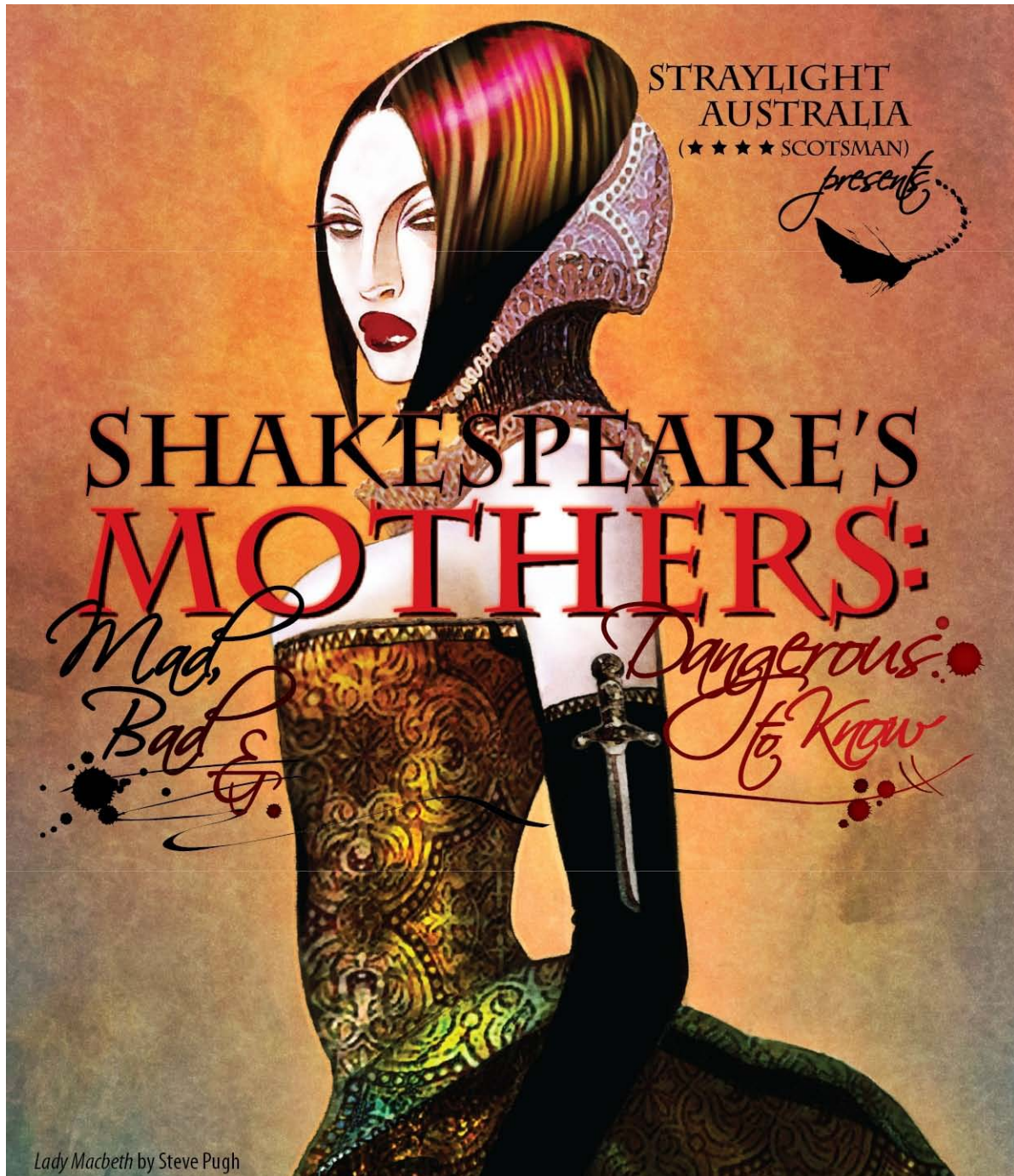


EDUCATION PACK



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INTRODUCTION

The mothers in Shakespeare are not often discussed and there has been very little analysis of their dramatic role in the plays. Many plays have no mothers in them at all, such as most of the comedies (The Taming of the Shrew, Much Ado About Nothing, Twelfth Night, As You Like It etc) as well as King Lear, The Merchant of Venice and others. However, as soon as you start to look for them, you realise that where mothers are present, they are almost invariably powerful figures who are very central to the plot and often responsible for driving it.

The stories of Titus Andronicus, King John and Coriolanus could not be told without Tamora, Constance and Volumnia and the fact that they are mothers is central to their motivation and actions. Motherhood for these characters is their most important attribute and their driving force. For some other characters, such as Hamlet's mother, Gertrude, and Juliet's mother, Lady Capulet, their motherhood is less central to their own lives but their role as mothers is important in the play.

In gathering so many of the mothers together for this play, it became apparent that their strength and determination, rampant protectiveness, lusty appetites and vaunting ambition, make them exciting and extraordinary characters to explore. Their battles are often fought against powerful enemies and their passions drive them to treachery, adultery, war, murder, grief and madness.

Shakespeare's Mothers: Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know is set in our risk-averse present, where Shakespeare is accused by the media of inciting female violence through his 'inappropriate' maternal role-models. Summoning his uneasy, warring mothers about him, he defends himself while they re-live their most thrilling, passionate and dangerous experiences.

"It's very exciting to have all these marvellous women on stage in one show and to hear the great lines Shakespeare wrote for them", says Greg de Polnay, who directed the Edinburgh Fringe production. Director of the Adelaide show, Roz Riley, adds "By putting the focus on the mothers, we suddenly see how cleverly Shakespeare used fiercely protective and ambitious women to drive some of his strongest plots."

Our play provides a fast-moving and exciting introduction to many of Shakespeare's mothers. We hope our audiences will find them as fascinating as we do and that they will go on to meet these women again in full-length versions of their plays.

Kath Perry
Straylight Australia

SHAKESPEARE'S MOTHERS and THEIR PLAYS

Lady Macbeth (*Macbeth* – see *Lady Macbeth's speech 'Was the hope drunk...'* 1.7)

Queen Margaret (*Henry VI pts II and III, Richard III*)

Duchess of York (*Richard III*)

Queen Elizabeth (*Richard III*)

Goneril (*King Lear* – see *Fool's speech 'I have used it, nuncle...'* 1.4)

Regan (*King Lear* – see *Fool's speech 'I have used it, nuncle...'* 1.4)

Tamora, Queen of the Goths (*Titus Andronicus*)

Constance (*King John*)

Queen Eleanor (*King John*)

Lady Falconbridge (*King John*)

Volumnia (*Coriolanus*)

Virgilia (*Coriolanus*)

Cymbeline's Queen (*Cymbeline*)

Gertrude (*Hamlet*)

Cleopatra (*Antony and Cleopatra* – see *Cleopatra's speech 'Antony did tell me of
you...'* 5.2)

Lady Capulet (*Romeo and Juliet*)

Nurse (*Romeo and Juliet*)

SCRIPT EXTRACTS from
SHAKESPEARE'S MOTHERS: MAD, BAD AND DANGEROUS TO KNOW

In the extracts from 'Shakespeare's Mothers' that follow, some of the dialogue and speeches from the original plays has been cut or slightly rearranged for brevity or emphasis. References are given below to allow the original text to be consulted.

It is important to be aware that only a few extracts of original text are used to introduce each character and that the stories of the plays are greatly abbreviated. A better understanding will be obtained from reading a detailed synopsis and/or the relevant Shakespeare play in full. The Further Resources page has suggestions of websites where these materials can be found.

However, the extracts given below, supported by the comments made by our 'Shakespeare' character will be sufficient to provide students with a framework for thinking about and discussing the issues raised in the suggested classroom activities.

Tamora, Queen of the Goths

Tamora's thirst for revenge when her eldest son is sacrificed to the gods after being captured in battle drives the action in the fictitious story of *Titus Andronicus*. The play is set in Rome in the 4th century AD. It is one of Shakespeare's earliest plays and was probably first performed in 1593, when he was 29 years old.

The speeches and scenes used in **Shakespeare's Mothers** are from: Act 1, scene i; Act 2, scene iii; Act 4, scene ii and Act 5, scene ii.

Constance

Constance's quest to win the English throne for her son, Prince Arthur, is the main storyline in *The Life and Death of King John*. The play is set in France around 1200 AD and was probably written in either 1595 or 1596. The story is based on historical fact. Like *Titus Andronicus*, the play is not very often performed these days.

The speeches and scenes used in **Shakespeare's Mothers** are from: Act 1, scene i; Act 2, scene i; Act 3, scene i and Act 3, scene 4.

Gertrude

As Hamlet's mother in *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, Gertrude's marriage to his father's brother and killer, Claudius, is the catalyst for all the action. The play is set in Denmark and is based on a Scandinavian folk tale dating from before the twelfth century. Shakespeare apparently wrote the play in 1600. It is one of his best known and most frequently performed plays.

The speeches and scenes used in **Shakespeare's Mothers** are from: Act 1, scene ii and Act 3, scene iv.

Lady Capulet

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Lady Capulet's distant relationship with her daughter underscores the inevitability of a tragic end to this story of young love. The play is set in Verona in Italy and is based on an old, well-known story, which was the subject of a poem by Arthur Brooke called *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*, published in 1562. Shakespeare's play was probably written in 1594 or 1595.

The speeches and scenes used in **Shakespeare's Mothers** are from: Act 1, scene iii and Act 3, scene v.

Volumnia

Volumnia lives her life through her son. In *Coriolanus*, her pride in him and influence over him shape his character and contribute to his downfall. The play is set in Rome in the 5th century BC. It is generally considered the last of Shakespeare's Roman plays and to have been written around 1608.

The speeches and scenes used in **Shakespeare's Mothers** are from: Act 1, scene iii; Act 4, scene ii and Act 5, scene iii.

TAMORA – QUEEN OF THE GOTHS
Titus Andronicus

Tamora

Ne'er let my heart know merry cheer indeed
Till all the Andronici be made away.

Shakespeare. Titus Andronicus was definitely my most bloodthirsty play and practically all the gore can be laid squarely at the door of Tamora, Queen of the Goths. Titus is a noble, upright, all-conquering war hero with a lovely, dutiful daughter, Lavinia, to whom he is devoted. To cause the necessary downfall of such a paragon, Tamora had to be bad. Very bad indeed, actually.

But Tamora was first and foremost a mother. The whole plot hinges on that fact. When Titus captures her and her three sons in battle, he decides to sacrifice the oldest lad to the Gods ...

Tamora

'Stay Roman bretheren! Gracious conqueror,
Victorious Titus, rue the tears I shed -
A mother's tears in passion for her son -
And if thy sons were ever dear to thee,
O, think my son to be as dear to me!
Sufficeth not that we are brought to Rome
To beautify thy triumphs, and return
Captive to thee and to thy Roman yoke;
But must my sons be slaughtered in the streets
For valiant doings in their country's cause?
O, if to fight for king and commonweal
Were piety in thine, it is in these.
Andronicus, stain not thy tomb with blood.
Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?
Draw near them then in being merciful.
Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge.
Thrice noble Titus, spare my first-born son.

Shakespeare. But he didn't...

Tamora

I'll find a day to massacre them all,
And raze their faction and their family,
The cruel father and his traitorous sons
To whom I sued for my dear son's life,
And make them know what 'tis to let a queen
Kneel in the streets and beg for grace in vain.'

Shakespeare. First, she marries Titus' most powerful enemy, the Emperor. Then she sets her sons on to rape and mutilate Titus' daughter.

Tamora

Remember, boys, I poured forth tears in vain
To save your brother from the sacrifice,
But fierce Andronicus would not relent.
Therefore away with her, and use her as you will -
The worse to her, the better loved of me.

Shakespeare. Next she has one of Titus' sons killed for a murder her lads committed, fools Titus into cutting his own hand off, drives him nuts and finally tries to trick him into luring his remaining son, Lucius, into danger.

Tamora

I am Revenge, sent from th'infernal kingdom
To ease the gnawing vulture of thy mind.
Show me a thousand that have done thee wrong,
And I will be revengéd on them all.
But would it please thee, good Andronicus,
To send for Lucius, thy thrice valiant son,
And bid him come and banquet at thy house -
When he is here, even at thy solemn feast,
I will bring in the Empress and her sons,
The Emperor himself and all thy foes,
And at thy mercy shall they stoop and kneel,
And on them shalt thou ease thy angry heart.'

Shakespeare. Remember, this is all done in revenge for the sacrifice of her eldest son, which is really quite reasonable.....

Nurse (*Cat*)

O gentle Aaron, we are all undone.
Now help, or woe betide thee evermore!

Aaron

Why what a caterwauling dost thou keep!
What dost thou wrap and fumble in thy arms?

Nurse

O, that which I would hide from heaven's eye,
Our Empress' shame and stately Rome's disgrace.
She is delivered, lords, she is delivered.
Here is the babe, as loathsome as a toad
Amongst the fair-faced breeders of our clime.
Empress Tamora sends it thee, thy stamp, thy seal,
And bids thee christen it with thy dagger's point.

Shakespeare. Ah, yes. Tamara does order her black lover, Aaron, to kill their baby before its colour can give her away to her husband – the Emperor. But you could see this, really, as a cautionary tale. Tamora does not get away with her bad behaviour. Her plot backfires and she ends up eating her two remaining sons baked in a pie before being stabbed to death by Titus and thrown over the city walls.

CONSTANCE
King John

Constance

You have beguiled me with a counterfeit
Resembling majesty, which being touched and tried
Proves valueless. You are forsworn, forsworn.

Shakespeare. That's Constance, from King John. Again, a warlike mother. Full of dangerous ambition for her son, Arthur, she pushes the Kings of France and Austria into war to win the English throne for him and is less than happy when they suggest making peace with his usurping uncle John ...

Constance

Arm, arm you heavens, against these perjured Kings!
A widow cries, be husband to me, God!
Let not the hours of this ungodly day
Wear out the day in peace, but ere sun set
Set armed discourse 'twixt these perjured Kings.
War, war, no peace! Peace is to me a war.
Hear me! Oh hear me!

Limoges

Lady Constance, peace!

Constance

O Limoges, thou slave, thou wretch, thou coward!
Thou little valiant, great in villainy;
Thou ever strong upon the stronger side;
Thou Fortune's champion, that dost never fight
But when her humorous ladyship is by
To teach thee safety. What a fool art thou.
And dost thou now fall over to my foes?
Thou wear a lion's hide! Doff it for shame,
And hang a calf's-skin on those recreant limbs.

Shakespeare. King John was supported against Constance by his mother, Queen Eleanor – another mother fighting for her son. Though, as they both knew John's claim was false, that probably makes her rather bad, too.

Q Eleanor

What now my son? Have I not ever said
How that ambitious Constance would not cease
Till she had kindled France and all the world
Upon the right and party of her son?

K John

Our strong possession and our right for us.

Q Eleanor

Your strong possession much more than your right,

Or else it must go wrong with you and me:
So much my conscience whispers in your ear,
Which none but heaven and you and I shall hear.

Shakespeare. It was on for young and old when the two mothers met in the field pre-battle:

Q Eleanor

Out, insolent! Thy bastard shall be king
That thou mayst be queen and check the world.

Constance

My boy a bastard? By my soul I think
His father was never so true begot.
It cannot be, an if thou wert his mother.

Q Eleanor

There's a good mother, boy, that blots thy father.

Constance

There's a good grandam, boy, that would blot thee.

Q Eleanor

Come to thy grandam, child.

Constance

Do, child, go to it grandam, child.
Give it grandam kingdom, and it grandam will
Give it a plum, a cherry and a fig.
There's a good grandam

Arthur

Good my mother, peace.
I would that I were low laid in my grave.
I am not worth this coil that's made for me. *(he weeps)*

Q Eleanor

His mother shames him so, poor boy, he weeps.

Constance

His grandam's wrongs, and not his mother's shames,
Draw those heaven-moving pearls from his poor eyes,
Ay, with those crystal beads heaven shall be bribed
To do him justice and revenge on you.

Q Eleanor

Thou monstrous slanderer of heaven and earth!

Constance

Call me not slanderer. Thou and thine usurp
The dominations, royalties and rights
Of this oppresséd boy. This is thy eld'st son's son,
Infortunate in nothing but in thee.

Q Eleanor

Thou unadvisèd scold, I can produce
A will that bars the title of thy son.

Constance

Ay, who doubts that? A will, a wicked will,
A woman's will, a cankered grandam's will!

Education Pack. Shakespeare's Mothers: Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know

Shakespeare. In fairness, I didn't let Constance get away with her warlike behaviour – even though it was in defence of her son's rightful inheritance. Arthur is soon captured by King John...

Constance

Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks with me up and down,
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form;
Then have I reason to be fond of grief.
Fare you well. Had you such a loss as I,
I could give better comfort than you do.

Shakespeare: To make things worse, Arthur subsequently falls to his death while escaping captivity. Yep, that old story. Though it's true in this case. Poor lad!

GERTRUDE
Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

Gertrude

Good Hamlet, cast thy nightly colour off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark
Do not for ever with thy veilèd lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust.

Shakespeare. Now here's a mum with the most difficult child of all! Hamlet's problem is that his real dad is dead and has been replaced in Gertrude's bed, rather too happily and a lot too quickly, by his wicked uncle. This upsets the lad a bit.

Hamlet

That it should come to this -
But two months dead – nay, not so much, not two -
So excellent a king, that was to this
Hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly! Heaven and earth,
Must I remember? Why she would hang on him
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on, and yet within a month -
Let me not think on't; frailty, thy name is woman -
Why she, even she, married with mine uncle.
She married. O most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!

Then, the ghost not only suggests to our hero that Gertrude and the new King may have been carrying on before the dad's death but accuses the villainous uncle of having poisoned him in order to get both the crown and the queen at one stroke. This makes Hamlet so moody his mum has to have a quiet word.....

Gertrude

Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

Hamlet

Mother, you have my father much offended.

Gertrude

Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

Hamlet

Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

Gertrude

Why, how now, Hamlet?

Hamlet

What's the matter now?

Gertrude

Have you forgot me?

Hamlet

No, by the rood, not so.
You are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife.
But - would you were not so – you are my mother.

Gertrude

What have I done, that thou dars't wag thy tongue
In noise so rude against me?

Hamlet

Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love
And sets a blister there.

Gertrude

Ay me, what act?
That roars so loud and thunders in the index?

Hamlet

Look here upon this picture, and on this,
This *was* your husband. Look you now what follows.
Here *is* your husband, like a mildewed ear
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,
And batten on this moor? Ha, have you eyes?
O shame, where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,
If thou canst mutiny in a matron's bones,
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,
And melt in her own fire.

Gertrude

O, speak no more:
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul:
And there I see such black and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct.

Hamlet

Nay, but to live
In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,
Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love
Over the nasty sty,

Gertrude

O speak to me no more:
These words like daggers enter in mine ears:
O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

Shakespeare: Hamlet's pre-occupation with his mother's sex-life may be a bit Oedipal but it does drive the plot along nicely. In the end, she dies horribly, of course, along with just about everyone else in the play.

LADY CAPULET
Romeo and Juliet

Lady C

Tell me, daughter Juliet,
How stands your disposition to be married?

Juliet

It is an honour that I dream not of.

Shakespeare: Doesn't look like a problem child, does she? Yet! But there is certainly trouble in store for Lady Capulet. It doesn't help that she's another mother with a pretty slim grasp on the whole 'mummy' thing. At first all is fine:

Lady C

Well, think of marriage now. Thus then, in brief:
The valiant Paris seeks you for his love.
What say you? Can you love the gentleman?

Juliet

I'll look to like, if looking liking move;
But no more deep will I endart mine eye
Than your consent gives strength to make it fly.

Shakespeare: But then Romeo turns up and we know things are going to go seriously off the rails. After the Balcony Scene, Romeo and Juliet get married in secret, Romeo kills her favourite cousin, Tybalt, in a brawl, then hops into bed with her for a quick honeymoon before fleeing into exile. Bit of a tough time for the girl! But it's about to get worse. Her vengeful mother arrives and tries to cheer her up. Open mouth, insert foot!

Lady C

Why how, now Juliet?

Juliet

Madam, I am not well.

Lady C

Evermore weeping for your cousin's death?
We will have vengeance for it, fear thou not.
Then weep no more. I'll send to one in Mantua,
Where that same banished runagate doth live,
Shall give him such an unaccustomed dram
That he shall soon keep Tybalt company;
And then I hope thou wilt be satisfied.

Juliet

Indeed, I never shall be satisfied
With Romeo till I behold him, dead,
Is my poor heart so for a kinsman vexed.

Lady C

But now I'll tell thee joyful tidings, girl.
Marry, my child, early next Thursday morn

The gallant, young, and noble gentleman
The County Paris at Saint Peter's Church
Shall happily make thee there a joyful bride.

Juliet

Now by St Peter's church and Peter, too,
He shall not make me there a joyful bride.
I pray you, tell my lord and father, madam
I will not marry yet; and when I do, I swear
It shall be Romeo, whom you know I hate -
Rather than Paris. These are news, indeed.

Lady C

Here comes your father. Tell him so yourself,
And see how he will take it at your hands.

Capulet

How now, wife?
Have you delivered to her our decree.

Lady C

Ay, sir, but she will none, she gives you thanks.
I would the fool were married to her grave.

Capulet

How, will she none? Doth she not give us thanks?
Is she not proud? Doth she not count her blest,
Unworthy as she is, that we have wrought
So worthy a gentleman to be her groom.

Juliet

Not proud you have, but thankful that you have.
Proud I can never be of what I hate,
But thankful e'en for hate that is meant love.

Capulet

Thank me no thankings, nor proud me no prouds,
An you be mine, I'll give you to my friend.
An you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets,
For, by my soul, I'll ne'er acknowledge thee,
Nor what is mine shall never do thee good.
Trust to't. Bethink you. I'll not be forsworn.

Juliet

O sweet my mother, cast me not away!
Delay this marriage for a month, a week;
Or if you do not, make the bridal bed
In that dim monument where Tybalt lies.

Lady C

Talk not to me, for I'll not speak a word.
Do as thou wilt, for I have done with thee.

Shakespeare: As I said – not very Mumsy! To avoid the impending marriage to Paris, Juliet takes a sleeping draught, gets mistaken for dead and put in the creepy family crypt. Then she is found by Romeo who, grief-stricken, kills himself. Whereupon, she wakes up and follows suit. Pretty tragic!

VOLUMNIA
Coriolanus

Volumnia

Methinks I hear your husband's drum,
See him pluck Aufidius down by th'hair;
As children from a bear, the Volsces shunning him.

Shakespeare. Now, here's Volumnia. Warlike, like Tamora and Constance, but living her battles through her son. Coriolanus, is a proud Roman warrior who can please her only through martial triumph. Her greedy ambition for his success makes them both dangerous.

Volumnia

When for a day of kings' entreaties a mother should not sell him an hour from her beholding,
I was pleased to let him seek danger where he was like to find fame. To a cruel war I sent
him, from whence he returned his brows bound with oak. I tell thee, daughter, I sprang not
more joy at first hearing he was a man-child than now at first seeing he had proved himself a
man.

Virgilia (*Cat*)

But had he died in the business, madam, how then?

Volumnia

Then his good report should have been my son. Hear me profess sincerely: had I a dozen
sons, each in my love alike, and none less dear than thine and my good Martius', I had rather
had eleven die nobly for their country than one voluptuously surfeit out of action.

Shakespeare: Despite his great victories, Coriolanus' pride gets him on the wrong side of powerful political interests and he is banished from Rome. Volumnia goes in to bat for him when she finds it out.

Volumnia

Hads't thou foxship
To banish him that struck more blows for Rome
Than thou hast spoken words?
'Twas you incensed the rabble -
Cats that can judge as fitly of his worth
As I can of those mysteries which heaven
Will not have earth to know.
Now, pray sir, get you gone.
You have done a brave deed. Ere you go, hear this:
As far doth the Capitol exceed
The meanest house in Rome, so far my son
Whom you have banished does exceed you all.

Shakespeare: Meanwhile, Coriolanus has changes sides. When he prepares to attack Rome – Volumnia takes his wife and son to the front lines and confronts him. It is a long and very eloquent argument that she puts but we will shorten it, as we've shortened many things here, in the interests of time.

Volumnia

How more unfortunate than all living women
Are we come hither, since that thy sight, which should
Make our eyes flow with joy, hearts dance with comforts,
Constrains them to weep and shake with fear and sorrow.
Making the mother, wife and child to see
The son, husband and the father tearing
His country's bowels out. Thou shalt no sooner
March to assault thy country than to tread -
Trust to't, thou shalt not – upon thy mother's womb
That brought thee to this world.

Virgilia

Ay, and mine,
That brought you forth this boy to keep your name
Living to time.

Coriolanus

Not of a woman's tenderness to be
Requires nor child nor woman's face to see.
I have sat too long.

Volumnia

Nay, go not from us thus.
Alas how can we for our country pray,
Whereto we are bound, together with thy victory,
Whereto we are bound? Alack, or we must lose
The country our dear nurse, or else thy person,
Our comfort in the country. For either thou
Must as a foreign recreant be led
With manacles throughout our streets, or else
Triumphantly tread on thy country's ruin,
And bear the palm for having bravely shed
Thy wife and children's blood.
Why dost not speak? - He turns away.
Down, ladies. Let us shame him with our knees.
To his surname 'Coriolanus' 'longs more pride
Than pity to our prayers. Down! An end.
This is the last. So we will home to Rome,
And die among our neighbours.

Coriolanus

O mother, mother!
You have won a happy victory to Rome;
But for your son, believe it, O believe it,
Most dangerously you have with him prevailed,
If not most mortal to him. But let it come.

Shakespeare. It is a hard lesson for Volumnia. Coriolanus brokers a truce and spares Rome but is then killed for betraying his allies.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Here are some suggested activities to prepare the class for watching **Shakespeare's Mothers: Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know**.

Not Only Mothers

Write, cast, rehearse and perform your own Shakespeare's Characters play.

- Think of your own subject for a show like this eg Shakespeare's Heroines, Shakespeare's Kings etc.
- Find 3-5 characters to include and decide on a theme for the show eg Brave and Brainy or Enemies Everywhere
- Choose some of your characters' scenes and speeches to illustrate your theme
- Decide how you will link them - you don't need to have 'Shakespeare' introduce them if you'd rather try something else.
- Put the script together, cast the roles and rehearse the show to put on for your class.

Mad, Bad and Dangerous - Mothers in the Media

The play suggests that the media are blaming Shakespeare's portrayal of mothers for increased involvement of women in violence and terrorist attacks. Write the newspaper story, blog, radio report or TV segment that may have first suggested this link. See if you can use real incidents from recent news reports as the basis of your account.

Add One Mother And Stir Well

Are there any mothers in the Shakespeare play you are currently studying in class? If not, how do you think the play would be changed if there was a mother involved? If so, how would the play be changed if the mother wasn't there. Role-play a couple of key scenes adding the mother or taking her out and see what happens.

Designing Mothers

Shakespeare's Mothers: Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know features 20 mothers from different countries and historical periods. All are played by 2 (female)actors who often have less than a minute to change character. Using the five mothers featured in these notes, design costumes for the play that will be practical for the actors, contribute to the visual appeal of the show and help the audience differentiate between the characters.

Girl Power

Many of the mothers in Shakespeare's plays were Queens, Empresses or other members of the ruling class. How does this affect their actions? Are there women in Australian society today who act like this? Write short scenes showing what makes these modern women mad, bad and dangerous to know.

WATCHING THE PLAY

When you watch the play, you will see how the director uses lighting, costumes and set to help the actors tell the story. Look out for these staging elements during the play so that you can discuss them in class afterwards.

Some of the things you may notice include:

The set

What does the stage look like? Are there any clues about the story from the way the floor or walls are decorated or from furniture or other objects on the stage?

Sound

Is there music playing when you come into the theatre space? If so, does it tell you anything about the play you are about to see?

Is any music used during the play? If so, what is its role in telling the story?

Are there any sound effects? Why do you think the director has chosen to use these?

Costume

Do the costumes suggest a particular time or place or mood? Do they contribute to the story in other ways? What colours are used and why do you think they were chosen? Are there a lot of costume changes? If so, how are these managed and are they effective?

Lighting

Are there changes in brightness and colour of the lighting? Is the whole stage lit all the time or does it switch from area to area. Are the lighting changes easy to spot or more subtle? Do they help tell the story? If so, how?

Action

Do the actors use the space well? Can you see and hear everything that is happening? Are exits and entrances dramatic or subtle?

How do the actors relate to the audience and to each other?

Can you notice places where the pace speeds up or slows down? Overall, does the show seem to move too slowly or too fast?

Characterisation

Each actor plays a lot of characters - what do they do to make each character distinct?

Which characters do you remember best at the end of the play, and why them?

The BIG Questions

What effect did the play have on you? What did you feel when you watched it? What did you want to talk about afterwards?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Shakespeare's Mothers: Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know](#)

Straylight Australia's website for the play: includes photos, biographies, media materials, technical specifications and more.

[Shakespeare Plot Summaries](#)

Spark Notes summaries for each of Shakespeare's plays.

[Shakespeare's Plays](#)

The full text of all of Shakespeare's plays available free from MIT to read or print.

[Shakespeare Information](#)

All kinds of information about Shakespeare and his world, including the full text of all his plays, a dictionary, quiz and list of insults!

[Mr William Shakespeare and the Internet](#)

A general guide to Shakespeare resources on the internet.

CONTACT US

If you have any queries about **Shakespeare's Mothers: Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know** or about this education pack, please email Kath Perry, Company Manager, at the following address:

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